

THOMAS HARDY – PRE-MODERN POET



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Hardy's tragic vision of a changing world leads him into **PROTO-MODERNISTS** form of writing, his unique beliefs and attitudes that give rise to his tragic expression. His psychological use of environment and the construction of metaphoric landscapes evoke a disturbing sense of place, in which individuals are diminished and displaced by nature. His experimental use of fetishism, the primitive, and his animism intensify the tragic situation in his poetry.

Hardy depicts **unconscious' destructive forces** those make isolated, and unstable individuals who fail to find fulfilment and connection with society. For him, there's something tragically absurd about the oppressive forces of modern society and the ways in which it forced individuals to act unnaturally – against their better instincts, often forcing them into desperate situations, which happens frequently in the case of marriage.

Hardy's **expressive landscapes** can be seen to be proto-modern because they offer up metaphoric and symbolic ways of reading life. Often indirectly they express sensations and meanings that are outside the scope of his characters and narrators. They take the reader beyond the human experience, into the natural but unknown world. The landscapes exhibit meanings that open up the tragic situation.

Hardy presents **human existence absurd**, which the famous topic of **Samuel Beckett** and **James Joyce**. He usefully expresses the inner and deeper realities of lonely and solitary character. By the mid of 19th century, the idea of individual isolation became overlaid by the recognition of the influence of more complex social and psychological forces. Hardy's post-romantic innovative examination of isolation is another Proto-modernist feature of his writing. By focusing on the damaging effects of isolation, Hardy creates tragic visions of the disorientated and lonely self, struggling to find meaning in an **agnostic universe**.

Thomas Hardy's name among the pre-modern poets is very great because he portrays human emotions, moods and mysteries of nature masterly. He violates the style of his contemporaries and diverts his attention towards **human misfortune**. He helps to secure recognition of the fact that laborers have human feelings and that the poor have other distresses than are merely brought about by poverty – his understanding sometimes fearful but always profound towards nature. He explores **two types of natures** in his works like the nature – a natural phenomenon, and 2nd the nature a person has from which he **defines himself**.

He preoccupies with the concept that mankind is the puppet, always baffled and finally destroyed by ruthless, pantheistic gods. He disbelieves the Christian idea of God. The notion that some **benevolent BEING** watched over its creatures on earth, guiding and strengthening, is incredible to man who sees only the working of nature's cruel, unmindful laws.

In one of his poems, a Roman soldier claims to have **fathered Christ**. The impact of this blasphemy on orthodox Victorian household can scarcely be imagined! In spite of fascination of human suffering, he tries to counterbalance sorrow with joy. He is one of the pre-modern writers who uses **COMMON-MAN & WOMAN** as his protagonists.

Hardy's genius describes as poetical in character, he published a collection of his poem under an odd title of '**TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS**' – which illustrates his ironical humor. His poetry is based on folk-songs with melancholy touch and grim titles as 'A Tramp Woman's Tragedy, 'The Dead Man Walking, 'The Man He Killed', and 'The Ruined Maid'. The theme is of death and decay, of the uselessness of earthly activity, of human failings and the inhumanity of fate, and harsh side of existence.

In 'The Ruined Maid', the title of the poem doesn't say which maid is ruined – the both are in a sense. The tone of the poem is light-hearted, it's a causal conversation between two friends, where first speaker doesn't seem to understand the true nature of 'Melia, and Melia doesn't seem to want to reveal her true circumstance to her friend. Hardy attacks Victorian attitudes towards

women. He reveals the **hypocrisy of respectable society** who claims to have moral belief but acting in different way. Each time, the woman points out something, 'Melia responds with a short, semi-snobby retort, usually to the effect of **'well, I'm ruined and this is what I get'**. By the end, the other woman admits that she too wishes she had all the nice things 'Melia does, to which she simply responds **'you can't because you're not a ruined girl'**.

The poem, 'The Man He Killed' represents the **futility of war** through a **dramatic monologue** of a soldier, lately returned from war. He admits, he killed a man of the opposing faction because he belongs to the enemy troops, but he also admits that he probably would have been a friend to him in other circumstances. The poem uses the right mixture of irony and innocence to provoke the **question of morality of war**. It forces on to think about political structure, constructs the war.

Hardy's characters are simple, passionate, fundamentally good people who struggles with their inner-self. He discusses sensuously attractive women with deep complicated emotions, yet **a pure woman** is his one of favorite topics. His art is to intensify the expression of things so that the heart and inner meaning is made vividly visible. The hearts of his characters are made very plain in his poetry.

In short, all his poetic techniques pave the way for modern writers who depicts absurdness of life, existentialism, psychoanalysis, realistically explore nature and characters who become the victim of nothingness. We find the elements of realism, naturalism, stream of consciousness, working of lost generation, imagism, and confessional dialogues in his writing. His abstract images unmasked the tragic mysteries of life, that's why he regards a leading pre-modern poet.